

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
South Dakota Department of the Military



DECEMBER 8 R.E.D. SHIRT FRIDAY EVENT TO RECOGNIZE DEPLOYED SERVICE MEMBERS

South Dakota employers, schools and residents are encouraged to show their support for all service members deployed overseas by participating in R.E.D. (Remember Everyone Deployed) Shirt Friday event on Dec. 8.

The South Dakota National Guard, Ellsworth Air Force Base and the S.D. Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve invites the public to participate by wearing a red shirt on all Fridays while South Dakota citizens are deployed to remember and honor all members of the military for their service to the state and nation.

The Dec. 8, R.E.D. event will highlight the 15 members of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 200th Engineer Company Bridge Training Team currently deployed to the Middle East. Throughout the past year, the SDNG has been highlighting deployed units and individual members during R.E.D Friday events.

"Wearing red shirts on Fridays sends a strong and unified message to our service members and families that they are not forgotten and we appreciate their sacrifice to our country," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG. "Wearing a red shirt is a simple gesture, but the meaning behind it is significant."

Gov. Dennis Daugaard has demonstrated his support by signing a proclamation announcing all Fridays that South Dakota citizens are deployed in harm's way to be R.E.D. Shirt Friday in South Dakota.

You can provide additional support by: sending cards/letters to the unit or someone in the unit, create a banner or video from your organization to send to the unit, check in with the family of a deployed service member, or provide a meal for a family of a deployed service member. Work with your local units to determine how to make this happen.

Currently, there are more than 200 South Dakota Army and Air National Guard members and about 580 Airmen from Ellsworth Air Force Base deployed to various locations around the globe.

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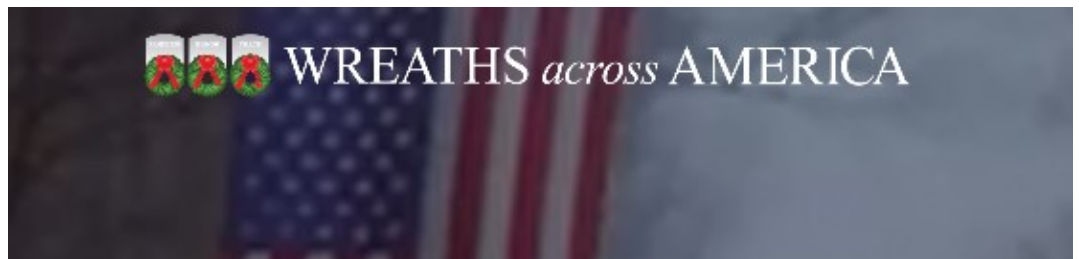
WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA PROGRAM SET

The South Dakota Funeral Directors Association will again participate in *Wreaths Across America*, a national program which pays tribute to fallen veterans of all wars during the Christmas season. A formal wreath presentation will be held at the Flaming Fountain Veterans Memorial on Capitol Lake in Pierre at 11:00 AM (Central Time) on Monday, December 11, 2017.

The *Wreaths Across America* story began in 1992 when businessman Morrill Worcester of the Worcester Wreath Company, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization since 2007, from Harrington, Maine, began a tradition of placing wreaths on the headstones of our Nation's fallen heroes at Arlington National Cemetery during the holidays.

In 2016, Wreaths Across America and its national network of volunteers laid over 1.2 Million remembrance wreaths at 1,228 cemeteries across the country. At Arlington National Cemetery specifically, 245,000 wreaths were placed by more than 45,000 volunteers – one for each marker in the cemetery. More than 400 truckloads of wreaths were transported across the country through a network of hundreds of volunteer drivers, donated trucking and diesel fuel, and countless hours of dedicated volunteers committed to the mission of Remember, Honor and Teach.

The Wreaths Across America's mission is to remember the fallen, honor those who serve including their families who sacrifice, and teach our children the cost of the freedoms we enjoy each day. It is our



shared belief that... 'The nation which forgets its defenders will soon be forgotten.' - Calvin Coolidge. Remember, Honor and Teach – is carried out in part each year by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies in December in Arlington, as well as at more than 1,200 veterans' cemeteries and other locations in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and national cemeteries on foreign soil. For more information, to sponsor a wreath or to sign up to volunteer, please visit www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org.

This year will be the 11th annual wreath laying ceremony in South Dakota. Participants in the South Dakota ceremony are the Board of Directors and members of the South Dakota Funeral Directors Association, Pierre Post 8 American Legion, Pierre VFW Post 2038, Oahe Marine Corps League, Vietnam Era Veterans Association, and the Disabled American Veterans. Featured speakers confirmed at this time will be Governor Dennis Daugaard; Major General Tim Reisch, Adjutant General of the South Dakota National Guard; and Andrea Eisenbeisz, President of the South Dakota Funeral Directors Association. The public is encouraged to attend to help pay tribute to fallen soldiers during the Christmas season.

The South Dakota Funeral Directors Association is a professional association that represents the funeral service professionals and the funeral home establishments in the state. The Association provides education, legislative representation and public relations statewide.

NEW VA DENTAL INSURANCE PLAN INFORMATION IS OUT

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has selected Delta Dental of California and MetLife to once again offer private insurance coverage for the VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP).

The Department of Veterans Affairs Dental Insurance Reauthorization Act of 2016 extends VADIP until December 31, 2021. Veterans who are enrolled in the VA health care system and beneficiaries and their dependents of the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the VA (CHAMPVA) can enroll in the program beginning November 15, 2017, for coverage to start December 1, 2017.

VADIP offers eligible individuals the opportunity to purchase discounted dental insurance coverage that includes diagnostic services, preventive services, endodontic and other restorative services, surgical services and emergency services.

Each individual covered by the dental insurance plan will pay the entire premium for coverage under the dental insurance plan, in addition to the full cost of any copays. Enrollment is voluntary and does not affect eligible individuals' entitlement to existing VHA outpatient dental services and treatment. Coverage for VADIP dental services is provided in the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Delta Dental and MetLife administered the three-year VADIP pilot program. Coverage under the VADIP pilot program began January 1, 2013, and more than 115,000 veterans and CHAMPVA beneficiaries enrolled in the program before it expired January 31, 2017. Individuals who enrolled in the pilot program must re-enroll to participate in the new version of the program. While the insurance providers will remain the same, plan options, fees and other factors may have changed from those offered under the pilot program.

Multiple plan options allow individuals to select a plan that provides benefits and premiums that meet their dental needs and budget. You may click each insurer's link for specific information regarding registration, rates and services, or call Delta Dental at 1-855-370-3303 or MetLife at 1-888-310-1681.

For more information check out the VA's fact sheet — https://www.va.gov/healthBenefits/vadip/vadip_ext_fact_sheet_2017.pdf

Click links below for more information VADIP plans.

<https://feds.deltadentalins.com/vadip/>

<https://www.metlife.com/vadip/>



Veterans Affairs Dental Insurance
Program

Veterans Affairs Dental Insurance Program



SUCCESSFUL DOD-VA PROGRAM FOR WOUNDED, ILL, INJURED SERVICE MEMBERS MARKS 10TH ANNIVERSARY

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) and U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) marked the 10th anniversary of the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES), a program developed by both organizations to streamline the disability evaluation process for wounded, ill, and injured service members being medically discharged from military service.

The VA and DoD celebrated the launch of IDES with a ceremony Nov. 28 at VA headquarters in Washington, D.C., where key officials shared a number of milestones and accomplishments of the innovative program that, to date, has helped more than 188,000 service members transition back into civilian life.

"Ten years ago, the VA and DOD had two separate processes for evaluating disabilities of wounded, ill, and injured service members when it came time for them to leave the service," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "On average, it took a service member more than 500 days to navigate those two programs during a critical transition period in their lives. IDES has transformed that process. Now, the average processing time has decreased by more than 40 percent."

When IDES began in 2007, VA and DoD worked hand-in-hand to make the program a seamless, simple, faster and fair system for service members. IDES eliminated the duplicative, time-consuming and often confusing elements of the disability assessment process within the agencies. Since its inception, the IDES process has helped ensure service members' access to VA benefits as soon as they separate from the military.

To learn more about the IDES program, visit <http://warriorcare.dodlive.mil/2012/04/13/ides-helps-soldier-transition-receive-benefits/>.

VA ANNOUNCES ROLLOUT AND APPLICATION PROCESS FOR NEW VETERANS ID CARD

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that the application process for the national Veterans Identification Card (VIC) is now available for veterans — yet another action honoring their service.

This has been mandated through legislation since 2015 to honor veterans, and today's rollout of the ID card fulfills that overdue promise.

Only those veterans with honorable service will be able to apply for the ID card, which will provide proof of military service, and may be accepted by retailers in lieu of the standard DD-214 form to obtain promotional discounts and other services where offered to veterans.

The VIC provides a more portable and secure alternative for those who served the minimum obligated time in service, but did not meet the retirement or medical discharge threshold. Veterans who served in the armed forces, including the reserve components, and who have a discharge of honorable or general (under honorable conditions) can request a VIC.

To request a VIC, veterans must visit vets.gov, click on "[Apply for Printed Veteran ID Card](#)" on the bottom left of the page and sign in or create an account.

Veterans who apply for a card should receive it within 60 days and can check delivery status of their cards at vets.gov. A digital version of the VIC will be available online by mid-December.

Sioux Falls Stampede

MILITARY APPRECIATION NIGHT

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9TH VS. YOUNGSTOWN @ 7:05 PM



**ALL ACTIVE AND
VETERAN MILITARY
MEMBERS CAN GET
FREE TICKETS FOR
FAMILY AND
FRIENDS**



**WATCH MEMBERS OF THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
RAPPEL FROM THE CEILING BEFORE THE GAME!**



TO RESERVE YOUR TICKETS:

CONTACT AARON POLLARD

OR

CALL KOREY AT (605) 336 - 6060

EMAIL: [KOREY@SFSTAMPEDE.COM](mailto:korey@sfstampede.com)

- **TICKETS MUST BE RESERVED BY 5 PM ON DECEMBER 8TH!**

VA APPOINTS NEW MEMBERS TO VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the appointment of 12 new members to its Veterans Advisory Committee on Education, to be chaired by former U.S. Sen. James H. Webb.

“Senator Webb has consistently put Veterans first throughout his career,” said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. “He will bring outstanding experience and knowledge to the leadership of the committee.”

By statute, the committee advises the Secretary on existing VA education benefit programs and services, as well as any new programs and services. The committee submits its recommendations and reports to the Secretary and may also submit reports to Congress.

“This committee is an extraordinary and diverse group of professionals who will bring their experiences and expertise for the good of our education programs,” Shulkin said.

Serving alongside Sen. Webb on the committee will be:

- * Vice Chairman Jared S. Lyon, president and CEO of Student Veterans of America;
- * Dawn Halfaker, founder and chief executive of Halfaker and Associates;
- * Dr. Sandra Harris-Hooker, vice president and senior associate dean at Morehouse School of Medicine;
- * Ashlynn Haycock, senior coordinator for Education Support Services for Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors;
- * Abby Kinch, Veteran student and president of the Florida State University Student Veterans of America chapter;
- * Jefferson Bingham Miller, senior legislative advisor at McDermott Will and Emery, former seven-term congressman and former chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee;
- * Dr. Javier Miyares, president of University of Maryland University College;
- * Jack Tilley, former sergeant major of the Army;
- * Robert E. Wallace, executive director, Veterans of Foreign Wars;
- * Dr. Joseph W. Westcott, executive director of the North Carolina State Approving Agency; and
- * Kyle Jerome White, seventh living recipient of the Medal of Honor from the war in Afghanistan.

HENDERSON NAMED NEW STATE VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

Michelle Henderson has been named state veterans service officer for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. Henderson fills the position that opened when Dusty Abrahamson departed.

Henderson joined the Department in August of 2017 after serving in the United States Air Force.

Michelle is very excited to have this opportunity to work with veterans and their family.

Michelle’s email address is: michelle.henderson@va.gov.



HEROES RETURN HOME

Four members of the South Dakota Army National Guard's Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, returned home Nov. 19 after serving more than six weeks supporting hurricane recovery operations in Puerto Rico.

The soldiers from the Watertown-based unit provided water distribution to those in need in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

"I'm most proud of the fact that our soldiers, along with members of the Puerto Rico and Ohio National Guard, were able to work together seamlessly to produce and distribute 920,000 gallons of water to the locals of Puerto Rico," said Staff Sgt. Greg Beynon of Sioux Falls. "To help out and see the people's faces and hear their thanks made me feel like I was truly helping."

The soldiers deployed to Puerto Rico Oct. 8 with two Load Handling System vehicles and trailers equipped with four Compatible Water Tank Racks, or "Hippos." Each Hippo has the capability to receive, store and distribute up to 2,000 gallons of potable water per system.



"Knowing that we are needed, beyond a home state crisis or a military conflict, was the most significant thing about this operation to me as a soldier in the South Dakota National Guard" said Sgt. 1st Class Roger Mitchell of Watertown. "I am really proud of the way everyone worked together to help those who needed it, regardless of our military branch or state of origin."

While there, the soldiers personally distributed more than 420,000 gallons of water to Puerto Rico residents. The unit members also helped to setup two water purification sites and two water distribution sites, which allowed for a total of 920,000 gallons of water to

be distributed in support of relief efforts.

"Being part of the National Guard was significant in this mission because I could use my training and my military skills to help," said Spc. Jorge Morales, originally from Puerto Rico. "My greatest pride in this experience was being able to help my people in such a difficult situation."

"Returning in these conditions was hard and painful," said Morales, who had not visited the island since 2014, "but it was more than an honor to be part of a team willing to help and cover a need. I was very satisfied with my work, my team, and that I can say 'mission accomplished.'"

WHITE HOUSE VA HOTLINE NOW FULLY STAFFED AND OPERATIONAL AROUND THE CLOCK TO SERVE NATION'S VETERANS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that the White House VA Hotline, first launched in June as part of President Donald J. Trump's commitment to reforming the VA, is now fully staffed with live agents working to serve veterans 24-hours a day, 365 days a year.

The hotline, which became 24-hour operational in mid-October, is now staffed by a team consisting of 90 percent veterans or employees who have a veteran family member, and is in response to veterans' requests to talk to agents who could relate to their experiences.

"The White House VA Hotline provides our nation's veterans with a direct, dedicated contact line allows them to interact with highly trained, live agents to answer their needs and concerns," said VA Secretary David J. Shulkin.

"Since the initial launch of the hotline in June, we listened to our veterans, who indicated that they prefer speaking with other veterans and veteran family members, and we adjusted our hiring based on that feedback," added Shulkin.

"We're proud that the hotline is now staffed 24/7 by a team of mostly veterans or veteran family members who have direct knowledge of their particular concerns and can use their experience to address them in the best way possible with the resources of the VA. This represents a true win-win for veterans and their loved ones."

Since 24/7 coverage began in October, the hotline has served more than 10,000 callers. Hotline agents answer inquiries, provide directory assistance, document concerns about VA care, benefits and services, and expedite the referral and resolution of those concerns. Agents undergo regular updates and training on VA services based on hotline trends and are assisted by newly implemented tracking software to help VA capture and improve its response, referral and resolution processes to best support veterans.

The hotline can be accessed at 855-948-2311 and is VA's first non-clinical, non-emergency around-the-clock call center. It provides veterans a supplemental option to report issues if they are not being addressed through VA's normal customer service channels.

The hotline's agents are located at a VA facility in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Agents have access to a multitude of resources and contact information to help veterans. The hotline also generates real-time reports to VA experts who can help address the specific issues of veterans as well as make better-informed decisions on where program improvements are needed.



VA TO PROVIDE HYPERBARIC OXYGEN THERAPY TO SOME VETERANS WITH CHRONIC PTSD

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it will offer Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) as a treatment option for a small number of veterans with persistent post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms resistant to standard options.

Providers from the Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System and the VA Northern California Health Care System will partner with HBOT providers at the Tulsa Wound Care and Hyperbaric Center at Oklahoma State Medical Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the David Grant Medical Center on Travis Air Force Base, California, respectively, to provide this care.

"There is nothing more important to us than caring for our nation's veterans, and that care must include finding different approaches that work best for them," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "We have to explore every avenue, particularly for our most medically vulnerable veterans, and be open to new ideas and strategies for their optimal health and well-being."

HBOT is a procedure that increases oxygen in the body, under pressure, to encourage healing. Currently, HBOT is commonly used to treat carbon monoxide poisoning, divers' sickness, enhanced healing of some wound problems, skin grafts, heat burns, crush injuries and other acute health-care issues that involve too little blood flow to a part of the body.

This use of HBOT for treatment of PTSD is considered an "off-label" use and will occur under the supervision of a trained physician. Separately, the VA and the Department of Defense are planning a multisite research study to examine more fully the use of HBOT for patients diagnosed with PTSD.

As health-care leaders interested in innovative approaches to care, the VA Center for Compassionate Innovation (CCI) is facilitating use of HBOT for a subset of veterans who have noticed no decrease of symptoms after receiving at least two evidenced-based treatments. CCI uses innovative approaches to treat conditions where traditional methods have been unsuccessful. The VA will monitor the HBOT clinical demonstration project and the HBOT research study to help inform the potential for HBOT usage to treat a larger number of veterans with PTSD.

For more information about VA's Center for Compassionate Innovation, go to <https://www.va.gov/healthpartnerships/>.



Upcoming Events

Dec 2-3—Yellow Ribbon for the 153rd EN—Mitchell
Dec 5—Governor's Budget Address—1:00 pm (CT)
Dec 9—Sioux Falls Stampede Military Appreciation Night—7:05 pm (CT)
Dec 12—SDDVA Mini Conference via Skype—10:00 am (CT)
Dec 18-19—SDDVA Staff in training
December 25-26—State Offices Closed

2018

Jan 1—Staff Offices Closed
Jan 9—Governor's State of the State Address—1:00 pm (CT)
Jan 10—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—RedRossa in Pierre—9:00 am (CT)
Jan 10—SDDVA/Veterans Council Legislative Reception—RedRossa in Pierre—5:00—8:00 pm (CT)
Jan 18—SD American Legion Legislative Reception—Post 8—Pierre—5:00 pm (CT)
Jan 28-29—VFW Legislative Conference—Ft. Pierre AmericInn
Jan 29—VFW Legislative Reception—AmericInn—Ft. Pierre—6:00 pm—7:30 pm (CT)
Feb 16-18 American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Oacoma
Mar 4-8 National VFW Conference—Washington, DC
Jun 7-10—American Legion State Convention—Spearfish
Jun 14-17—VFW State Convention—Sioux Falls
Aug 20-24—SDDVA Benefits School—Ramkota—Pierre

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